DIVERSION CASH ASSISTANCE

Purpose: This category describes an emergency cash payment available to families that meet the eligibility criteria for TANF or SFA but do not need ongoing monthly cash assistance. Assistance under this program is limited to one thirty-day period every 12 months.

WAC 388-432-0005 Can I get help from DSHS for a family emergency without receiving monthly cash assistance?

DSHS has a program called Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA). If your family needs an emergency cash payment but does not need ongoing monthly cash assistance, you may be eligible for this program.

(1)   To get DCA, you must:

  (a)   Meet all the eligibility rules for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)/ State Family Assistance (SFA) except:

    (i)   You do not have to participate in WorkFirst requirements as defined in Chapter 388-310 WAC; and

    (ii)   You do not have to assign child support rights or cooperate with Division of Child Support as defined in Chapter 388-422 WAC;

  (b)   Have a current bona fide or approved need for living expenses;

  (c)   Provide proof that your need exists; and

  (d)   Have or expect to get enough income or resources to support yourselves for at least twelve months.

(2)   You may get DCA to help pay for one or more of the following needs:

  (a)   Child care;

  (b)   Housing;

  (c)   Transportation;

(d)   Expenses to get or keep a job;

(e)   Food costs, but not if an adult member of your family has been disqualified for food stamps; or

(f)   Medical costs, except when an adult member of your family is not eligible because of failure to provide third party liability (TPL) information as defined in WAC 388-505-0540**.**

(3)   DCA payments are limited to:

(a)   One thousand five hundred dollars once in a twelve-month period which starts with the month the DCA benefits begin; and

(b)   The cost of your need.

(4)   We do not budget your income or make you use your resources to lower the amount of DCA payments you can receive.

(5)   DCA payments can be paid:

(a)   All at once; or

(b)   As separate payments over a thirty-day period. The thirty-day period starts with the date of your first DCA payment.

(6)   When it is possible, we pay your DCA benefit directly to the service provider.

(7)   You are not eligible for DCA if:

(a)   Any adult member of your assistance unit got DCA within the last 12 months;

(b)   Any adult member of your assistance unit gets TANF/SFA;

(c)   Any adult member of your assistance unit is not eligible for cash assistance for any reason unless one parent in a two-parent-assistance unit is receiving SSI; or

(d)   Your assistance unit does not have a needy adult (such as when you do not receive TANF/SFA payment for yourself but receive it for the children only).

(8)   If you apply for DCA after your TANF/SFA grant has been terminated, we consider you an applicant for DCA.

(9)   If you apply for TANF/SFA and you received DCA less than twelve months ago:

   (a)   We set up a DCA loan.

      (i)   The amount of the loan is one-twelfth of the total DCA benefit times the number of months that are left in the twelve- month period.

      (ii)   The first month begins with the month DCA benefits began.

   (b)   We collect the loan only by reducing your grant. We take five percent of your TANF/SFA grant each month.

(10)   If you stop getting TANF/SFA before you have repaid the loan, we stop collecting the loan unless you get back on TANF/SFA.

CLARIFYING INFORMATION

1.   **TANF/SFA eligibility:**

In order to be eligible for DCA, the assistance unit must meet all of the eligibility requirements for TANF/SFA except WorkFirst requirements and assignment of child support rights. See PROGRAM SUMMARY for the eligibility requirements of each program. The eligibility requirements include the limits for earned income, unearned income and resources.

2.   **Ineligible for cash assistance:**

   a.   Reasons why an adult member of a family may not be eligible under WAC 388-432-0005 (7)(c) include but are not limited to:

      (1)   Immigration status;

       (2)   Conviction in a state or federal court for unlawful practices in getting TANF/SFA;

       (3)   Conviction in a state or federal court of misrepresenting residence in order to get public assistance in two or more states;

       (4)   Disqualification because of being a fleeing felon;

       (5)   Conviction of a felony involving the use, possession or distribution of controlled substances.

   b.   Child only cases (with non-needy relative caretaker) are not eligible for DCA.

3.   **Effect of DCA on food assistance:**

   a.   If DCA payment is made directly to the client:

       (1)   It is considered a non-recurring lump sum payment and not counted as income.

       (2)   It is counted as a resource in the month received.

   b.   If DCA payment is made directly to the vendor:

       (1)   It is considered a vendor payment for emergency and special assistance and not counted as income.

       (2)   It is not counted as a resource.

WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

1.   When a family requests DCA, have the family complete an application as required in WAC 388-406-0010.

2.   Determine if the family meets all eligibility criteria for TANF/SFA other than WorkFirst requirements and assignment of child support.

EXAMPLE

A two-person AU (mom and child) applies for DCA. Mom's gross earned income is $1000 a month and this is entered in ACES. The AU is not eligible for DCA since they do not meet the maximum gross earned income standard of $880 a month. ACES will deny the AU for over the gross earned income standard. Have ACES send out the denial letter. Follow up to see if the family would like to apply for food and medical assistance and determine eligibility if family is interested.

> **NOTE:**   All DCA denials need to be in writing. Make sure you have ACES send out the denial notice or letter.

3. Decide if the family has a bona fide need such as the ones listed in WAC 388-432-0005 (2). The family must provide proof of this need. Issue a denial letter if either need or proof does not exist.

EXAMPLE

A four-person AU (mom and three children) applies for DCA. Mom's gross earned income for the AU is $1200. No other source of income is available for the AU. Family is requesting $1350 to fix their car. Mom needs the car for transportation to and from employment. However, mom does not have proof of the amount needed to fix the car. The AU will need to provide proof that $1350 is needed to repair car (i.e. telephone number and name of repair garage, invoice from garage showing estimated costs for car repairs). If mom does not provide proof, enter the ACES 586 code (Ineligible for DA) for the AU and have ACES send out denial notice. Follow up to see if the family would like to apply for food and TANF/SFA cash assistance and determine eligibility if the family is interested.

4. Decide if the family has enough or is expected to get enough income or resources to keep them off of TANF/SFA for 12 months.

    a. Use these guidelines to help determine a family's ability to remain off TANF/SFA. Other factors may also be considered but must be documented in the case file:

        (1)   Is there a current or potential income source?

        (2)   Is this enough income to enable the family to stay self-sufficient?

(3)   Does the applicant's history indicate an ability to remain self-sufficient?

(4)   Is the applicant highly motivated to stay off TANF/SFA?

b.   If there is little chance that the family could be self-sufficient, issue a denial letter for DCA benefits. Help the family consider applying for ongoing assistance or referrals to community resources.

5.   Review whether the family has received DCA payment in the past 12-month period or if the family is currently receiving TANF/SFA. If the family received DCA in the last 12 months or if the family is currently receiving TANF/SFA, issue a denial letter.

EXAMPLE

Three-person AU (mom, dad and child) applies for DCA in September 2000. Currently, they receive no assistance. They last received DCA in May 2000. Since 12 months have not passed since the last time the AU has received DCA, enter in ACES 586 closing code (Ineligible for DA) and have ACES send out the denial notice.

6.   Decide how much the family requires to meet their bona fide needs (up to $1500). Do not pay more than the need. Make the payment directly to the vendor whenever possible.

EXAMPLE

A two-person household (dad and child) applies for DCA. The only source of income for the AU is unemployment benefits of $400 a month. Since the AU has section 8 housing, their rent is $57 a month. Dad's unemployment benefits will end but he expects to go back to work in four weeks based on doctor's statement. The AU requests DCA to pay for car repair bills. Dad needs the car to return back to work. He provided an invoice from the garage to verify the estimated cost to repair his car at $1200. Send approval letter ACES A11C. Make the payment to the car repair garage. Open F04 medical for the family. Two weeks later, AU applies for additional DCA and requests $300 for overdue medical expenses not covered by his insurance. He provides proof of this need. The AU is eligible to receive this second payment since it is within the 30-day period. Send additional DCA request status letter ACES C05C and make the payment to the medical provider. However, since both payments add up to

$1500, the AU has reached the maximum limit and cannot receive any more DCA payments for 12 months unless approved through an Exception To Rule (ETR).

> **NOTE:** All families found eligible for DCA cash are also eligible for F04 family medical. Open F04 medical for all DCA eligible families.

7. Refer the family for any other benefits and resources that can help them to be self-sufficient. Encourage clients to use Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) to help pay for childcare expenses.

8. **TANF / SFA eligibility within the DCA 12-month period:** If you approve TANF/SFA within 12 months of the family's DCA begin date, establish the DCA loan.

   a. The amount of the loan depends on how many months the client remained off TANF/SFA before they start receiving TANF/SFA. Calculate the loan amount by using these steps:

      (1) Starting with the month DCA benefits began count the number of months before the month TANF/SFA benefits start.

      (2) Subtract the months that have gone by from 12 to determine the number of remaining months.

      (3) The number of remaining months is multiplied by one-twelfth of the total DCA payment to calculate the amount that must be repaid.

   b. DCA assistance units remain open in ACES for 12 months but do not receive monthly payments.

   c. You must close the DCA assistance unit with the ACES closing code 585 (DA Adult Eligible for TANF) in order to open TANF/SFA for months in the 12-month period.

   d. ACES will create the necessary Benefit Error Group (BEG) for any closed months in the 12-month period.

   e. Send the client a BE5C letter and update the BEG to finalize the loan and initiate a repayment process.

ACES PROCEDURES

1.   **General information:**

    a.   When you process a DCA case, ACES requires the same information as it does for TANF/SFA except for absent parent screens, (WORK) screen and ELIG ESTAB DATE field.

    b.   However, if a case unit contains both TANF and DCA assistance units, the [ELIG ESTAB DATE] on the VERF screen needs to be entered when either approving or denying the TANF AU.

2.   **(BOND) and (VEND) screens:** In addition to the screens for TANF/SFA, you must complete the (BOND) and (VEND) screens to process DCA.

    a.   **(BOND) screen**

        (1)   Enter the [bona fide need code the family has] in the NEED TYPE field. See <F1> for codes. **Do not use [EP] or [OT**].

        (2)   Enter the [amount of money the family requested to meet their bona fide need] in the NEED AMOUNT field.

        (3)   Enter the [amount of money that is being authorized to meet the family's bona fide need] in the AUTH AMOUNT field. The need amount and the authorized amount does not have to be the same. The user will be prevented from continuing to the next screen if the amount entered in the AUTH AMOUNT field totals more than $1500. When money is to be issued to more than one vendor for the same bona fide need code DO NOT COMBINE THE AMOUNTS ON THE BOND SCREEN. Enter each separately.

        (4)   Enter the [proof of bona fide need code] in the V field. See <F1> for codes.

        (5)   Enter the [family's need date] in the NEED DATE field.

        (6)   Enter [Y] for Yes, if payment will be made to the vendor or [N] for No, if payment will be made directly to the client in the

VENDOR field. The [Y] changes the default value on the (CAFI) to [Y].

(7)   Enter [the income source code the family is anticipated to receive] in the FUTURE SUPPORT field. See <F1> for codes.

b.   **(VEND) screen**

(1)   The authorized amount and need type information will be carried over from the (BOND) screen.

(2)   Enter the (total benefit amount) in the BENEFIT AMT field.

(3)   Enter the (vendor ID number) in the VENDOR NUMBER field. To see if the vendor already has an ID number assigned, press <F16> to go the Vendor File Submenu.

(a)   In the SELECTION field, enter (A), Vendor Name Inquiry.

(b)   In the VENDOR NAME field, enter (the first letter of the vendor name).

(c)   In the VENDOR CITY field, enter (the city in which the vendor is located).

(d)   A list of all vendors in that city that begin with the letter you entered will be displayed. This allows you to determine if a vendor ID number has been assigned regardless of the way the vendor name was entered in the system.

(4)   Enter the (client's name or account number) in the ACCOUNT NUMBER/NAME field. This is the only client identifying information on the vendor's warrant.

(5)   If more than one vendor payment is entered on the (BOND) screen, another (VEND) screen will display. Repeat steps above.

3.   **To make more than one DCA payment in the 30-day period:**

a.   Use the same AU through [R] of the original authorization to process the additional DCA payment. This is necessary to track the accumulation of DCA benefits up to the $1500 limit.

b.   Enter [CH] in the UP REAS field on (CAFI). This will create a BEG. Confirm the under-issuance through the BEGs menu and have supervisor authorize

4.   **Change of circumstances:**

a.   The system will not recalculate eligibility in any month other than the benefit month and for any reason other than a change in the benefit (BOND) screen. Any other changes recorded in the AU will not result in a recalculation of eligibility

b.   ACES calculates loan repayments for DCA, when a DCA AU is closed prior to the end of the 12 month DCA period

(1)   When a DCA recipient applies for TANF benefits, close the DCA assistance unit using Reason Code 585, beginning with the month the client is eligible for TANF and each of the future months in ACES. Before closing the DCA AU, make sure the client is eligible to receive TANF.

(2)   If the DCA AU is not closed before the TANF AU is finalized the user will receive a dual participation edit when trying to finalize the TANF AU. If the client is not eligible for TANF, no DCA loan exists.